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THE CHARACTER AND BLESSEDNESS OF THE HUMBLE.

ISAIAH LXVI. 2.—*To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*

"Poor;" that is *humble*. So the word is translated in several other places; and so the reason of the thing shows that it should be understood here. Does not God look to the wealthy who are of a contrite spirit, and who tremble at his word, as really as to the poor? What is there in the context to show that the prophet is pointing out a distinction in the *external condition* of men? Is it not *character* only which he is describing? And did not God look,—look with favor, for that is the meaning here,—to David, when he was of that contrite spirit which dictated the 51st psalm? And was he poor, literally? Was he not a king, and immensely rich?

"Poor," in the text, must then mean "poor in spirit," as is he whom Christ, in his sermon on the mount, pronounces "blessed."

"And of a contrite spirit." "Contrite;" smitten,—*wounded*, literally, contrite in spirit,—smitten, wounded *in heart*:—broken-hearted: that is, deeply affected with a sense of sin—penitent. It is such a feeling as David had after Nathan reproved him: such as the woman who washed the Saviour's feet with tears had: such as the publican had: such as Peter had when he "went out and wept bitterly."

Who "trembleth at my word;"—not only feareth greatly the judg-  
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ments which God threatens, but reverenceth his word, and is unwilling to disobey it, and heartily desirous to keep it.

To such a man God "will look." He will fix his eye upon him, and not "hide his face" from him, as he does from those he hates, and intends to punish. To such a man he will look, as an object of delight. To him he will look, as *men* love to look to objects and scenes which are beautiful, though with infinitely more delight and love. Here then we have,

THE CHARACTER AND BLESSEDNESS OF THE HUMBLE AND PENITENT MAN.

I. What then is that humility, and that penitence, spoken of in the text?

This trait of character does not consist in *meanness of exterior*.—A miserable hut, coarse and tattered garments, and other things in like style, may be the consequences of a man's idleness and vice. Or he may choose them, from mere love of singularity, or for the reputation of humility. Or they may come of unavoidable poverty. In such cases they are either badges of his pride, or, at best, no distinctive signs of character at all. He must be but little acquainted with the world who does not know that sackcloth and rags may cover a proud man, as well as purple and gems.

Nor is this trait of character the same as *bashfulness* or *diffidence*. This may be mere confusion produced by conscious guilt, or by want of acquaintance with the world, or by a fear of showing some defect of body or mind. Or it may be device to obtain praise. Here, mere men are all one thinks of. God, and sin against God, are out of view.

It is not the same as *tameness of spirit*. The man who has it may firmly claim his rights, and not suffer himself to be meanly trampled on. He may be conscious that, as a man, he is on a level with other men: that he, as they, has a rational and moral nature, and a right to promote his own good, and seek his own happiness. And he may act according to this view of himself, and of his rights. He may judge for himself as to what he shall believe and do,—he may speak for himself, and act for himself. He may show, indeed, great respect and deference to others. He may get all the light and knowledge from them which they are capable of giving. To them, in all their rightful authority, he may cheerfully submit. But he may not receive their opinions on trust, or servilely crouch to them, in all their self-assumed authority, and all their unlawful oppressions, as one who belongs to an inferior order of creatures.—He may claim

and retain his station and his office, as a teacher, a guardian, a parent, a magistrate, a pastor.

This humility is not inconsistent with *enterprise* and noble aspiring. The man who has it, conscious of his own powers, and understanding what he can do, with the blessing of God, may devise and attempt great things. He may plan great improvements in his department of business. He may thirst for knowledge, and may apply all his powers of mind to grasp the principles of science, and accumulate stores of knowledge.—Especially, he may thirst for spiritual knowledge, and knowledge on all points connected with religion ;—he may study and search the Scriptures, and look to God by prayer, day and night. Thus he may press on to know God, may hold delightful intercourse with the loftiest intellects, and may stand on the very pinnacle of greatness and elevation.

And again ; as to active labor, he may have great enterprise in doing good. His benevolent desires may embrace the whole world ; and he may devise for the entire regeneration and happiness and glory of the millions who tread upon its surface. And, to this end, he may deny himself, and labor with the utmost vigor of which man is capable. In this enterprise of doing good, he may trample beneath him all selfishness, meanness, littleness of mind, and may secure, by universal consent, a character for true magnanimity.

Once more : this trait of character does not consist in *confessions*, or similar *outward show*, of any kind.—A man may confess that he is unworthy—that he is a sinner—and that he is a *great* sinner : he may do it with many words, and the strongest terms in the language : and he may in his tones of voice, in his features, his gestures, and his whole manner show the same self-abasement : and he may do all this publicly ;—yet the whole may be mere “voluntary humility.” He may do it for praise ; or he may be forced to do it by circumstances, to hold any thing of tolerable standing among the pious ;—or it may be merely from the pressure of conscience ; or divine judgments, felt or feared, may drive him to this course. His heart may still be proud and hard, though his head be “bowed down like a bulrush.”

In illustration of the remarks made above, I could point you to examples of both proud and humble men, mentioned in the Scriptures. Proud and hard-hearted Pharaoh made confessions of his sins. And wicked Ahab put on all the appearance of humiliation and self-abasement. On the other hand, look to Abraham, Moses, David, Job, Isaiah, and Daniel. Here you have specimens, in very humble men, of great nobleness of mind. Look especially to Paul. Who, of all the race of man, more humble and penitent than he ? Yet who ever

had more manliness, boldness, self-respect, courage, enterprise, magnanimity?

What then is that trait of character mentioned in the text?

*A deep, a heart-felt sense of littleness and sin in the sight of God.* The man who has it takes a right *standard* of character: not any of those false standards which the world set up. His eye is fixed on God. He has looked at his eternal self-existence, his infinite knowledge and power, his omnipresence, his supreme authority and dominion over the universe. He has looked at his truth and faithfulness, his holiness and justice, his love, and mercy, and grace:—all perfect, infinite, divine. He has looked at him as creating all things, and as the “former of his body, and the Father of his spirit”—the preserver of his life, and the bountiful giver of all he enjoys. Especially, he has looked at the gift of his own Son to die in our stead, and at all the privileges here, and the blessedness and glory hereafter, purchased by his blood.

And in presence of such a God, what is he?—“a creature of yesterday,” who “knows nothing”—whose “foundation is in the dust, and who is crushed before the moth.” In the presence of God he dwindles into nothing. Compared with some other orders of *creatures* he is inferior. In knowledge and wisdom the angels excel him. And in physical strength he is far outdone by some of the brute creation.—But in the presence of God especially, he feels himself to be infinitely small—“nothing, and less than nothing.”

But in his *moral* character he feels more deeply still his distance from God. How can perfect moral pollution, as he is by nature, and in himself, come within the presence of infinite purity?—And then, again, how great his criminality! God, being his Creator, has an infinite claim to him, and all he has. God, being his Law-giver and Sovereign, has an infinite claim to all his services. But, instead of feeling that he is the Lord's, he has felt that he was *his own*. Instead of loving God with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, he has been filled with hatred and enmity. Instead of reverencing and adoring, he has despised and contemned him. Instead of praising, he has blasphemed him,—at least forgotten all his benefits, and been silent in his praise. Instead of serving him with all his powers, he has constantly rebelled, and transgressed his holy law.

And where is that welcome and joyful reception of his Son who came and died to save him? Often and often has he turned his back, and spurned him away. And where is that ready yielding to the motions of the Spirit who has been sent to draw him to Christ

and heaven? Often has he resisted all the movings of that good Spirit.

And even after he had been renewed, and pardoned, and adopted as a child, and known the unspeakable delight of "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ," and had engaged and covenanted to follow his Saviour, and be obedient,—often has he forgotten all this mercy, and all this enjoyment, and all these engagements, and grown cold in his love, and neglected his service, and perhaps positively and openly transgressed his commandments.—Yea, after he had been pardoned afresh, and his backslidings had been healed, he has again and again relapsed and revolted.

He feels then that his criminality has been great; greater than tongue can speak, or heart conceive. He feels that the deepest hell is his desert. And as he looks on his sins, and looks on Christ who has suffered for him on the cross, his heart heaves, and is convulsed and broken. He is filled with grief unutterable. His heart throbs with godly sorrow. He seeks where he may retire from the bustle of business, hide himself from every human eye, and there fall down and pour out his soul in tears and confessions to God.

He is not unwilling to make confession *before men*. Nay, he desires it, and cannot help doing it. He cannot help justifying and giving glory to God, and taking all shame to himself, in the most public manner. As he has, before the world, dishonored and disobeyed God, he cannot help honoring him thus publicly before the world. But his way of doing it will not be worldly, and ostentatious, and noisy. The deepest rivers are still. There is a gentle motion perceived by the ear at the water's edge, but there is immense power out of sight. There is little language or ceremony when long-separated friends meet; but the heart finds a way to express itself in embraces and tears.—So the humble and penitent man uses few and modest words; but they indicate, by the manner in which they are used, strong, unseen, deep feeling in the heart.

But, as said before, he seeks retirement, where he may be alone with God. There he tells the whole. There, where his whole life, and whole heart are open,—there he "pours out the soul." There he lets the floods gush from his eyes. There he lets the heart bleed. There he sinks, or *would* sink, infinitely low. There is the mourning spoken of by the prophet Zechariah—a mourning for sin; like the feeling of one who is "in bitterness for his first-born." And ye who have lost a first-born know what that is.—A mourning, not public, not social—this is not enough,—private. "They shall mourn every family *apart*, and their wives *apart*."—Each one alone—alone



with God. This was the penitence of Peter. A look from Christ filled his heart, and he "went out"—went out to a retired place, where he could be alone, and there "wept bitterly."

This was the humility and penitence of Brainerd. "I fell down before the Lord, and groaned under my own vileness, barrenness, and deadness." "My heart was overwhelmed within me—I verily thought, I am the meanest, vilest creature living. It appeared impossible that one so vile should be thus employed—doing any special service for God in the world." This was the humility and penitence of Edwards. "Often I have had very affecting views of my own sinfulness and vileness; very frequently to such a degree as to keep me in a kind of loud weeping—so that I have often been forced to shut myself up. My sinfulness, as I am in myself, has long appeared to me perfectly ineffable, and swallowing up all thought and imagination like an infinite deluge or mountains over my head. I know not how to express better what my sins appear to me to be, than by heaping infinite upon infinite, and multiplying infinite by infinite. Very often, for these many years, these expressions are in my mind, and in my mouth, Infinite upon infinite—Infinite upon infinite! When I look into my heart and take a view of my sinfulness, it looks like an abyss deeper than hell. There was no part of creature holiness of which I had so great a sense of its loveliness, as humility, brokenness of heart, and poverty of spirit; and there was nothing that I so earnestly longed for. My heart panted after this;—that I might be nothing, and that God might be all."

This is humility and penitence. This is the poverty and contriteness of spirit brought to view in the text.

II. And how will this feeling show itself in the various conditions and intercourse of life?

(1.) *In submission to God.*—This man, feeling his infinite littleness, will not be offended by the lowest condition: nor, feeling his infinite vileness and his just desert of everlasting misery, will he think unjust or unkind any temporal evils.

To *poverty* he submits. Be it that he has not the luxuries and comforts, but the bare *necessaries* of life. Paul "knew how to be abased" and how to "suffer need," as well as how to "abound," and "how to be full." He was "content in whatsoever state he was," even were it his lot to suffer "nakedness," and "hunger" and "thirst."

To *sickness* and *pain* he submits. Be it that his frail body is laid on a bed of languishing. Be it that it is pierced through and through with the sharp arrows of the Almighty. What is this to the lake of fire in which he feels that he might have been justly doomed

to burn forever ! Job, in such an evil case, said, " Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil ? " And Payson said, " These are God's arrows, but they are all sharpened by love." And another child of God, under the calamity of broken bones, and to her sympathizing, but perhaps inconsiderate friends, said, " I hope I have not a bone in my body which I am not willing to have broken, if it is the will of God."

To *bereavement* he submits. A child, a first-born, beautiful, intelligent, lovely, and full of promise, languishes and dies. Another child is taken, and another, and another ! But all is right. God has taken only what was his,—only what the parent was utterly unworthy to possess *at all*, and clearly unworthy to retain longer. Look at Job, under the loss, not of one, but of *all*, and of *all at a stroke*. " The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away : blessed be the name of the Lord."

To a *low station* and to *obscurity* he submits. He sees one and another rising to distinction and borne upward on the acclaim of the multitude. In his view they may not be specially deserving of these honors. They may have obtained them by the partiality of friends, or by some accidental circumstance wholly disconnected with real merit. He, meanwhile, is retired and obscure, unknown and untalked of by the world. This is not a rare case, even with those who have great worth.

" Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear ;  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

To the *want of literary advantages* he submits. He thirsts for learning, and pants for it " as the hart panteth after the water brooks." He longs to trace the whole circle of the sciences, and traverse the whole field of literature ; but his health fails, or some other providential hinderance is thrown in his way, and he is compelled to stop. But he submits.

To *small success* he submits. In the enterprises for the advancement of education, which he had with much time and thought planned, he fails of success. Or he cannot bring others to embrace those important religious truths which he labors to inculcate. Or he cannot effect that reformation of morals, or that improvement in the church, for which he labors, and studies, and prays. But, much as others may succeed, and distressing to his benevolent heart as may be the failure in his own case, he submits. He is infinitely unworthy to be the instrument of *any* good, and shall he, such a sinner, complain ?

To neglect, slander, and cursing he submits. There are those who endeavor in every way to blacken his character, to bring upon him contempt, to hedge up his way, and drive him from his place. They accuse him. They belie him. They condemn him. They say all manner of evil against him. They curse him. He dwells among those whose "teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." Perhaps pretended friends, and those who have much influence, join in the slander. If they do not *literally* belie and slander him, they say things and do things which have all the *effect* of slander. They do, at least, suffer all this in silence, and thus by silence give consent; when they might, by timely aid, and timely vindication, frown into shame his opposers, and raise him up to higher standing than ever. Thus he comes to be treated with general coldness and neglect, and his influence is taken away. Thus at times was David treated, and Jeremiah, and Paul, and Edwards. But he submits. Look at David, from whom the hearts of Israel had been, by deceit and flattery, turned, and who was compelled to flee from the throne, and from Jerusalem. "Carry back," said he, "the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." And again: listen to him, when Shimei came out and cursed him: "Let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him."

Once more: *to the sovereignty of God in bestowing his grace he submits.* He lives where the Spirit of God is poured out, and religion is revived. Great numbers are awakened and converted. But his son, dear as his own soul, is left in stupidity. He goes farther and farther from God. Again the Spirit is poured out. But this son is left to oppose the work, and to wax worse and worse. He flees from the means of grace—grows more and more wicked, and is cut off in all his sins. Ah! here is anguish which cannot be told. "Would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" But he submits. Shall he, a creature of a day, and a sinner so vile, dictate to God whom he shall save? "Thy will be done."

(2.) This feeling of humility shows itself in being satisfied with *the lowest place among men, consistent with the call of Providence.*

This man, feeling his infinite vileness, can hardly believe that any can be so vile as he. He feels that he is the least of the saints. He will, therefore, not only take the lowest place *before God*, but, "esteeming others better than himself," the lowest place *among men*.



This was the feeling of Paul. He not only thought himself the chief of sinners, but the least of the saints. Yea, more—he viewed himself to be “less than the least of all saints.” And his whole life showed, that he sought the lowest place among men. He sought to be “least of all, and servant of all.” He rejoiced when others were “honorable,” and he was “despised;” and he took delight in “abasing himself.” This was the feeling of Edwards: “I cannot bear the thoughts of being no more humble than other Christians. It seems to me, that though their degrees of humility may be suitable for them, yet it would be a vile self-exaltation in me not to be the lowest in humility of all mankind.” This is the feeling of every humble and penitent man: he seeks the lowest place. This feeling, therefore, shows itself,

(3.) In a *modest, unassuming air*. Feeling his infinite littleness and his ignorance, he is sensible that he is liable to mistake on many points. He will not therefore bluster, and be confident and authoritative in argument and instruction. He will feel that he may be under a mistake as to the subject now before him, and others may be nearer the truth than he. Though he may have studied long, and taught long, and though the subject may appear to him very clear; yea, though he may seem to have done good by holding up the same views; yet he may be in error. He will, therefore, be modest in expressing his opinions, and show a high respect to the opinions of others:—especially will he do this when in the presence of those of more than ordinary talents, and education, and mental improvement. He will not seek to gain his point by ridicule, and sneers, and caricature; by wit; by sophistry; or by the authority of place, and office, and reputation. He *has* no point to *gain* but the truth. Personal victory and personal fame are out of view. It is the victory and reign of *truth* that he seeks. He will, therefore, be very respectful to others, and candidly and fairly weigh and state their opinions, and modestly hold up his own. Even if he is as sure of the correctness of his opinions as he is that the sun shines at mid-day,—and this on some points he may be, the deepest humility notwithstanding,—still, in the expression of them, he will be modest, rather than dogmatic and assuming. A creature so small, and a sinner so vile, he cannot, even in holding up *truth*, put on the air of pride and authority. He will hold it up as the rose puts forth its leaves of surpassing beauty, hidden, I had almost said, within itself. So in all his actions, and all his intercourse with men, he will be modest and unassuming.

(4.) This feeling will show itself *in joy at the prosperity of others*.

This man, as we have seen, has high and admiring thoughts of the perfections of God, natural and moral. Wherever, therefore, he sees the radiations of those attributes, or the image of those attributes, he will take pleasure in looking at them. Wherever he sees knowledge, and wisdom, and love, and holiness, he will rejoice. Wherever he sees a man of intelligence and holiness, reflecting brightly the image of Christ, and rapidly rising to higher attainments, it pours a tide of joy through his heart. Even if that man start up by his side, and soar on eagle's wings far above him, he still rejoices. Yea, though he rise from a place far below him, and pass and soar above him, he still rejoices. Envy has no place in his bosom. How can it? Feeling himself infinitely small, and infinitely vile, and esteeming others better than himself, where is there any room for envy? No! vile passion!—his lowly spirit shrinks from its touch. He cannot bear its pollution. No: he rejoices in all the attainments of others.

With what pleasure does Peter speak of the superior attainments of Paul! And with what pleasure does Paul himself speak of the excellences and distinction of other apostles! and of the precious grace of common Christians "who were in Christ before him!" and of all the gifts and attainments of his brethren! And so will the man of this spirit rejoice in *all* the good of others.

(5.) This feeling will show itself in *heartly forgiveness of injuries*. How can this man "take by the throat" a debtor who owes him a "hundred pence" only, when he himself owes his God "ten thousand talents, and has nothing to pay?" Be it that evil-minded men have done him an injury. Be it that they have heaped injury upon injury. Be it that they have taken his property, scattered his family, traduced his character, and done violence to his person. Be it that he is sinking in death under their ruthless hands—what is this to the dishonor which he has cast upon God?—to the injury he has done to his kingdom?—to the death which he has helped to inflict on his Son Jesus Christ?—And can he whose heart bleeds and bleeds for these sins of infinite malignity against God, be revengeful for the small offences of men—his fellow-sinners? Shall he who has been forgiven of God for even these sins, refuse to forgive a fellow worm? "Lord," said the dying Stephen, "lay not this sin to their charge." And so will the humble and penitent man in all cases forgive his enemies; and pray for them, and do them good.

(6.) This feeling shows itself in *readiness to acknowledge errors and faults*.

This man, feeling his infinite littleness, has no pride of under-

standing. He does not study and speak with a view to show himself a great man. It is the truth which he seeks, and the victory of truth for which he contends. Whenever, therefore, he finds his opinions to be wrong respecting principles or men, he will readily admit the fact. When he finds that his measures, resulting from these opinions, have been wrong and unwise, he will acknowledge it. He will not hold on upon his opinions and measures, laboring, with infinite pains, to show that they are correct. He will not practise mean evasion by pretending that he was misinformed; or did not understand the circumstances; or was not *himself* understood as to his opinions, or as to his intentions in what he did. He will frankly acknowledge that he was in error.

And so, whatever fault he has committed, or wrong thing done, he will acknowledge it. Feeling his infinite vileness and criminality, he has no pride of character. Whatever wrong, then, he has done to another—there being no pride to prevent a confession—he will frankly own it. He may sustain an office—he may be high in rank—he may be an editor, and his work extensively known; but he will acknowledge the error and the wrong. Look to the spirit of Brainerd: "If this were the case, that a man has done me a hundred injuries, and I (though ever so much provoked to it) have done him one, I am heartily willing humbly to confess my fault to him, and on my knees to ask forgiveness of him; though, at the same time, he should justify himself in all the injuries he has done me, and should only make use of my humble confession to blacken my character the more, and represent me as the only person guilty; yea, though he should, as it were, insult me, and say, 'he knew all this before, and that I was making work for repentance.'"

(7.) This feeling shows itself in *lively gratitude and fervent praise*.

To the man who feels deserving of eternal death, any privilege—any comfort, will seem unspeakably great:—a cup of water—a breath of air, will be such. Amid these great privileges, then—these comforts without number, which in even the worst condition he enjoys—especially pardon—Christ—the Holy Spirit—eternal life—his heart is full. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." And what are those praises I hear yonder? They come from the *dungeon*!—for Paul and Silas, smeared with blood, and smarting with stripes, and fastened in the stocks, are yet praising God! yea, amid exquisite pain and distress itself, he is grateful. "I have suf-

fered," says Payson, "twenty times, yes, to speak within bounds, twenty times as much as I could in being burnt at the stake, while my joy in God has been so abundant, as to render my sufferings not only tolerable, but welcome."

(8.) This feeling shows itself in *universal obedience*.

With those exalted thoughts of God, and that deep feeling of sorrow for having sinned, how can this man continue to disobey and dishonor God, whom he esteems to be, in every respect, infinitely above him,—whose, entirely, he feels that he and all that he has is,—and whom with his whole heart he loves! Break that law in which he ardently delights! Respect that sin, which he hates, and for which his heart bleeds! Can this be? Was such a thing ever known? No. "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." "I esteem all thy precepts, concerning all things, to be right; and I hate every false way." *Universal obedience*—this is what he renders. This is that "trembling at the word of God" spoken of in the text:—that reverencing, loving, and obeying his word, which are there implied.

This, then, is the feeling brought to view in the text;—and these some of the ways in which that feeling is shown.

III. Contemplate now the *BLESSEDNESS* of this man.

"To this man will I look." And where else, on earth, should he look? Where do you seek the most beautiful and most valued flower? Is it in the sun-flower, which, high in air, puts forth, nakedly and boldly, its whole form?—or in the rose, which almost hides itself from the eye? The mines of silver and gold are hidden in the earth. Pearls are at the ocean's bed. You admire the form of the earth—you admire the current of the rivers, and that immense power of machinery, and all that connected good, which this current produces—you admire the firm stand which you, and all that is yours, maintain on the surface of this solid earth—you admire the regular revolutions of the earth and other mighty orbs around the sun;—but the *cause* of all this—the attraction of gravitation is hidden from the eye. You see the flowers, and herbages, and fruits of the earth; but the fertility of the earth itself you cannot see. You see trees, and animals, and men, full of life, and growth, and strength, and activity: but the principle of life itself, what and where is it?—that you cannot see. You see the actions of a man, and hear his words, and look upon his countenance, and see the changes of features; and you feel his warm embrace; and you witness the knowledge, and holi-

ness, and happiness which he is extensively diffusing abroad : but the heart, the fountain of all this good, did you ever see that ?

We see, then, that the most precious things—the most powerful—those on which all others depend, and without which all others are nothing—are not such as tower high : not such as show out before the eyes of men : not such as lie on the surface. They are retired—low—deep—hidden.

And where on earth shall God look ? To the proud, and towering, and vain, and forward, and noisy, and boastful ? Or shall he look to the humble and penitent ?—to those who are retired—“ unknown ”—“ hidden ? ” This—if there is any analogy between spiritual and temporal things—this is the precious spirit ; and these are the precious ones. And where on earth shall God look but to this spirit, and to these persons ?

Again : This spirit highly honors and exalts God. What can do it more ? It places him upon the throne, infinitely high. It acknowledges, distinctly and emphatically, all his glorious attributes, natural and moral. Even his sovereignty in bestowing his grace,—his justice,—and his awful indignation at sin, it acknowledges as glorious attributes. And how can God help looking at that spirit which so truly and justly exalts himself ?

And especially, this spirit acknowledges the perfections of God in the plan of *redemption*. It shows his infinite wisdom, love, and power, in this great scheme of salvation. It gloriously exalts the Saviour, Jesus Christ. How “ wonderful ” must he be, in greatness, in merit, in fulness, in love, and in power, who can save an innumerable multitude so vile, so criminal, so miserable, so deserving of eternal death ! And how can God help looking at that spirit, which so exalts him, whom “ all the angels worship,” who is the “ Fellow of the Lord of Hosts,” whom we are required to “ honor, even as we honor the Father,” who alone hath “ revealed ” God, and in honoring whom we do especially honor the Father who sent him ?

To this man, then, God will look :—look with interest—complacency—delight. You turn away from objects which are ugly and disgusting, and from the landscape which holds out to your eye nothing but moss-grown rocks, or a dead forest, or withered fields, or a sandy plain. But a beautiful flower, or tree, or animal ; a landscape of verdure, and variety, and beauty, and sublimity,—these take your eye, and hold it. You turn with disgust from the face of an enemy : but from the friend who has your heart, you cannot look away. So God will fix his eye on the man who is humble and con-



trite ; and with infinite love and delight ; and from him he will not for a moment turn away. He "cannot look on iniquity ;" and from the wicked he "hideth his face." But "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous."

And what good will come of God's thus looking to this man ?

*Every thing will be done for him.* You do every thing for the tree which you value for its beauty, or its worth. You give it the best of soil ; you protect it from being injured ; you prune it ; and you do every thing which may promote its growth, its beauty, its fruitfulness, its worth. You do every thing for the domestic animal you highly esteem, and on which you delight to look. You do every thing for the garden, or farm, on which you set a high value, and on which you love to look. So God will do every thing for the man to whom he thus looks ;—every thing to promote his growth in grace, his usefulness, and his final blessedness and glory. If he sees that riches, and health, and friends, and learning, and office, and honor, will make him more holy or useful, he will give them. Or if he sees that other treatment will be best for him, and will more promote his usefulness, he will suffer trouble and affliction to come. He may let "all his waves and his billows go over him." Thus he may teach him the vanity of this world, and his own weakness and dependence, and bring him to trust more entirely in God. Thus he may give him opportunity to shine with a brighter lustre of holiness, and in this way to convince others of the reality, and excellence, and power of religion.

Yes ; he may be stripped of health, and property, and friends, as was Job. He may be hated, and sold into bondage and imprisonment, like Joseph. He may be driven from his place, and from the house of God, and hunted from covert to covert in the wilderness, like David. He may be thrown into the fiery furnace, like the three Jews in Babylon ; or into the lions' den, as Daniel. He may be scourged, and stoned, and thrown into prison, as the apostles. He may be martyred, as were Abel, and the prophets and apostles of the Lord ; and as have been thousands of saints ; even with all imaginable circumstances of torture and disgrace.

But the Lord "will look" to him still. He will watch over him. He will guard him as "the apple of his eye." He will not suffer any of his enemies to hurt him. He will not suffer any evil to touch him which will not purify him, and make him shine the brighter. If he send "tribulation," it is that it may "work patience, and experience, and hope that maketh not ashamed." If he is made to ex-

perience "infirmity," it is "that the power of Christ may rest upon him."

He will seek his greatest usefulness. If he is sold into Egypt and imprisoned, it is that he may save that and other people from famine, and provide a resting-place for the church of God. If he is hunted in the wilderness, and slandered, and cursed, it is that he may be a better king, and write better psalms for the church in all future time. If he is cast, in his wounds and blood, into the dungeon, it is that the jailer may be converted. If he and others are "scattered abroad" by persecution, it is that they may "go every where preaching the word." If he is carried in bonds to Rome, it is that he may preach the gospel in the metropolis of the world. God will stand by him, and assist him. He will, by the Holy Spirit, "teach him what to say;" "give him a mouth and wisdom, that all his adversaries will not be able to gainsay or resist." He will "work in" him, and work with him. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." He may not *see* the prosperity. But he will, in the end, experience good "above what he asks, or thinks." His course, like that of the river, will be marked with verdure, and thrift, and beauty, and fruitfulness.

How could God help thus looking to, and thus blessing, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Paul, Bunyan, Whitefield, Fletcher, Edwards, Brainerd, and others of the same spirit? And thus will he look to and bless the humble and penitent man in death. He will carry him safely and comfortably, perhaps triumphantly through. And what will he have in heaven? I might speak of his throne, and crown, and kingdom; I might speak of his shining as the firmament—as the stars—and as the sun. I might speak of the "fulness of joy," and "pleasures at God's right hand." But all this is feeble language. He will look upon God, and God will look upon him, for ever and ever! And what can he have more?

This subject has an important bearing,—

*On all that is done for religion in the world.* You form societies to do away vice, and to send the gospel through the earth. But your party-spirit, pride of understanding and worth, censoriousness, self-confidence and self-complacency, may both prejudice men against your enterprise, and turn away the face of God. You preach the gospel. But have you no pride of talent, of learning, of place, of notoriety and fame? Are you willing to preach in obscurity? Do

you "esteem" your brethren "better than yourself?" You preach the gospel. But where is that humility which will secure the complacent look of God, and his blessing on your efforts? You labor, as a private member, to purify and raise the church. But for lack of humility and contrition God is not with you, and the church is made worse rather than better. You labor to convert sinners. But wanting this spirit God is not with you, and you harden them the more. O, were all Christians of this humble and contrite spirit, legions would fall before them, and the world would submit to Christ.

Finally: this subject has an important bearing *on the individual safety and happiness of every one*. Have you this spirit? Blessed man! God looks to you, and loves to look, and will look, and smile for ever. But ah! how many who have it not!—and many who have hope!—and many in the church!—and many, shall I say, who are high in office and honor! Vain mortals! "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?" Proud followers of the meek and lowly Jesus! How incongruous the thought! O, "the face of God is against you." "God resisteth the proud." He will frown you away into "outer darkness," and his "wrath will abide upon you forever!